1
07th Expansion & Nokuno Kouke present.
"HOTARU-BI NO TOMORU KORONI"
蛍火の灯る頃に
竜騎士07
小池ノクト
ACTION COMICS

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE JUST A BORING VISIT TO THE VILLAGE.
CHAPTER 1
第一話

ズゥン…

ズゥン

When the Fireflies Glow

蛍火の灯る頃に

1

07th Expansion & Nokuto Koike present
"HOTARU-BI NO TOMORU KORONI"

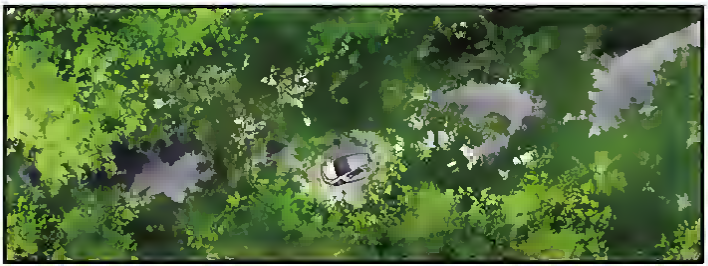
[原作] 竜騎士07 [作画] 小池ノクト

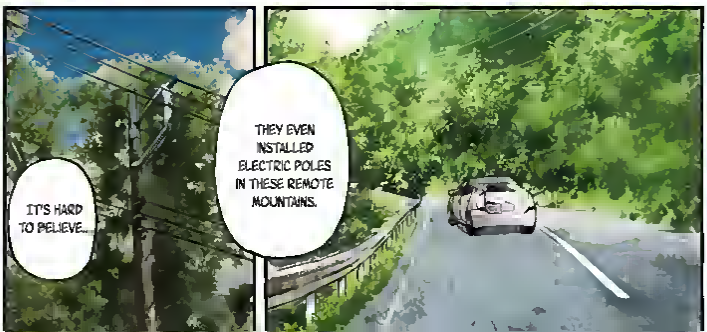
Story: Ryūkishi 07 Art: Koike Nokuto

第一話［帰郷］

Chapter 1 : Coming Back home

JULY
2016




IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE...
THEY EVEN INSTALLED ELECTRIC POLES IN THESE REMOTE MOUNTAINS.

WE'VE BEEN DRIVING ON THE PREFECTURAL ROAD FOR AN HOUR ALREADY, BUT WE DIDN'T COME ACROSS ANY CARS...
I HOPE WE DIDN'T ... TAKE THE WRONG ROUTE...?

LET'S SEE... EARLIER, ON OUR RIGHT...
WE COULD SEE THE KUROTAMA MOUNTAIN ...

AFTER THE BRIDGE AT THE END OF THIS ROAD...
WE COULD TAKE A LEFT, AND...
YUE.

DON'T SWEAT IT, THAT'S WHAT THE CAR NAVIGATION IS FOR.
YOU'D BETTER HAVE SOME REST.

MAYBE, BUT...
THE CAR NAVIGATION CAN MAKE MISTAKES TOO, SO...
.....
BRO!
AREN'T YOU A BIT THIRSTY?

.....

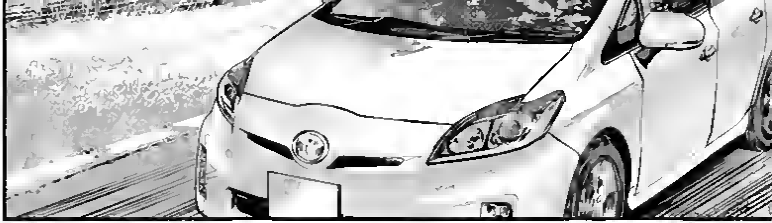
...AH, SHIT!
I SCREWED UP AGAIN ...
THAT'S THE TENTH TIME, HOW HARD IS THIS FUCKING STAGE?!

YOU WANT SOME TEA?
NAH, I'LL BE FINE.

OH...
R- RIGHT, SILLY ME.
I'M SORRY.

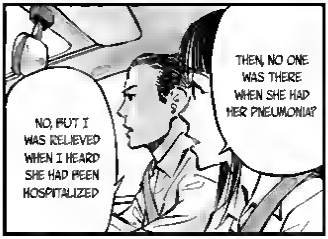
WHAT ABOUT YOU, DAD?
HAVE SOME. IT'S STILL WARM, YOU KNOW?

I'M DRIVING, SO, MAYBE LATER.



SHE WAS SERIOUS AND A HARD WORKER.

SAY, WHAT KIND OF PERSON WAS GRAND-MOTHER?


THEN, NO ONE WAS THERE WHEN SHE HAD HER PNEUMONIA?
NO, BUT I WAS RELIEVED WHEN I HEARD SHE HAD BEEN HOSPITALIZED

I AND MY BROTHERS WANTED TO TAKE HER WITH US IN THE CITY
BUT IN THE END, SHE STAYED ALONE IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE.

I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT SHE WOULD LEAVE US
SO SUDDENLY ..

OF COURSE
DAD..
YOUR BROTHERS WILL COME AT THE WAKE TOO, WON'T THEY...?
.....
IS THIS GONNA BE ALRIGHT...?
YUE.
B-- BECAUSE OF ME AND MOM..
I MEAN, YOU HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THAT HEAVY ATMOSPHERE
EVERY TIME YOU MEET WITH THEM...
YUE!

I'M SORRY..
AH...
SORRY...
...THAT'S NOTHING TO BE SO FLUSTERED ABOUT, YOU KNOW?
AND NOW THERE'S LAG TOO!
AGH!
WHY WON'T THIS GOD-DAMN SKILL COME OUT, ALREADY?!
...COME ON!
SHIT!
GIVE ME BACK MY GEMS, WILL YA?!
I DON'T GET IT!
GAH...
YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT?

DON'T GIVE UP...
YOU'LL GET IT THE NEXT TIME...

WHAT?!
THAT'S WHY YOU STOPPED?
THAT'S THE CUSTOM

?
ISN'T GRANNY'S HOUSE A BIT FURTHER AHEAD?

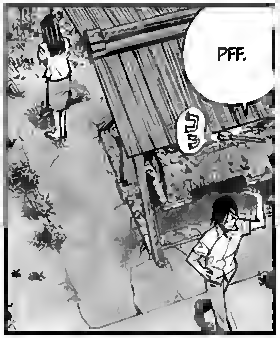
THERE'S A HAND-WASHING BASIN HERE.
COME WASH YOUR HANDS.

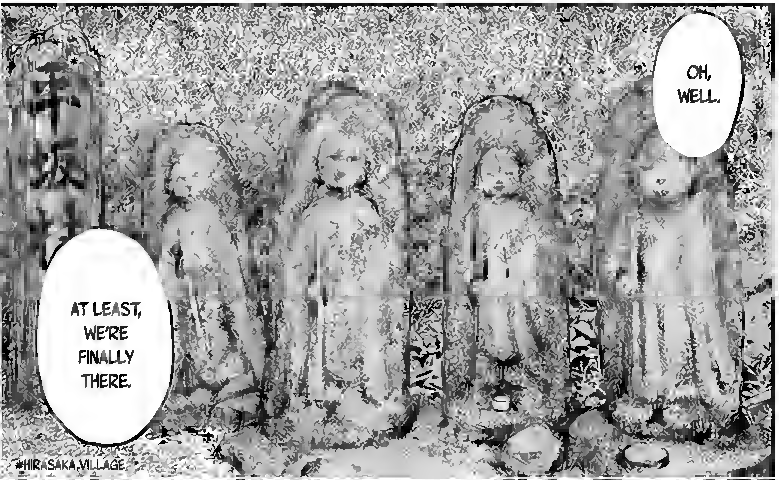
IT'S COLD!
COME ON, YOU TOO.

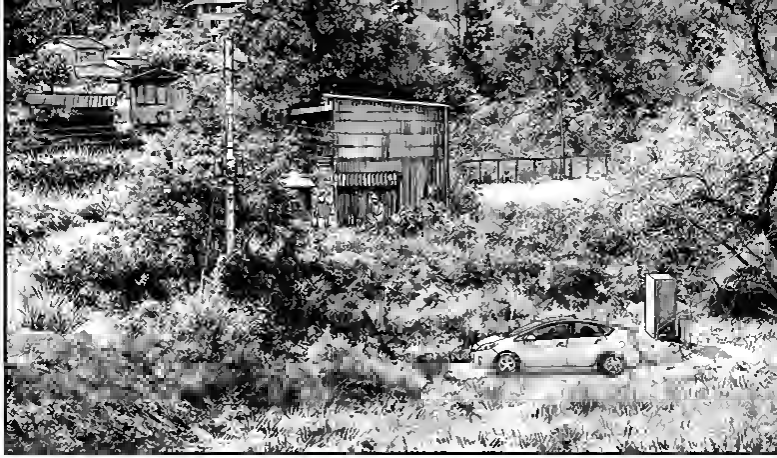
I MEAN NOW

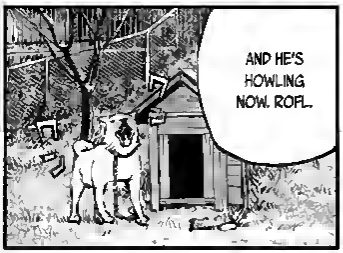
...

...PFF!
WHAT A PAIN!


PFF.
HMM


OH, WELL.
AT LEAST, WE'RE FINALLY THERE.
HIRASAKA VILLAGE




AND HE'S HOWLING NOW. ROFL.

HAHA, SO THAT DOG IS STILL ALIVE, HUH?

HERE'S THE HOUSE

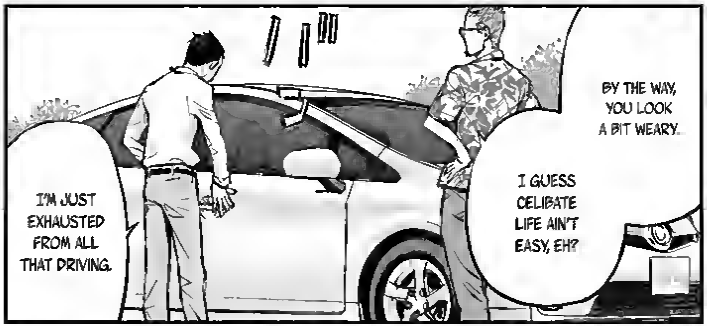
IT'S REALLY BEAUTIFUL.
IT'S LIKE WE'RE ON A MOVIE'S SET!

OH, IT'S NOBUTERU'S CAR

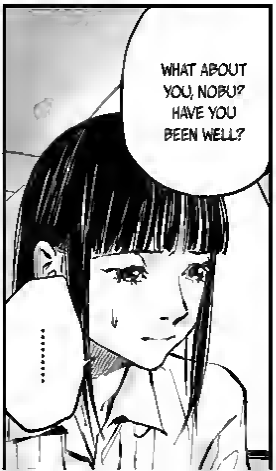
SEEMS LIKE WE'RE DEAD LAST

!

HEYA, BIG BRO.
TOOK YOU SOME TIME TO ARRIVE.
EVERYONE'S GOTTEN READY AGES AGO.

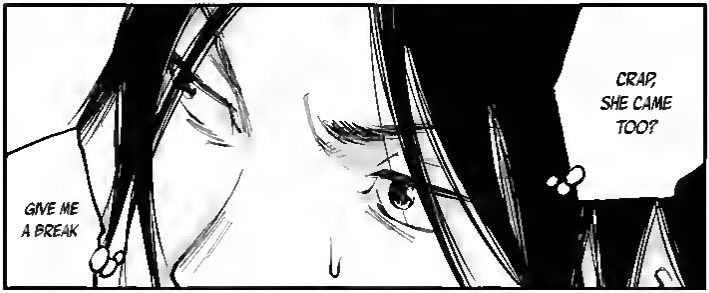

BY THE WAY, YOU LOOK A BIT WEARY.
I GUESS CELIBATE LIFE AIN'T EASY, EH?
I'M JUST EXHAUSTED FROM ALL THAT DRIVING.

HEH, DON'T LUMP ME TOGETHER WITH YOU.
I'M STILL A YOUNG MAN IN HIS THIRTIES IN MY HEAD!

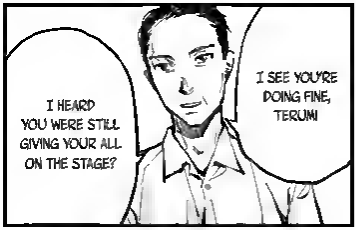

WHAT ABOUT YOU, NOBU? HAVE YOU BEEN WELL?
.....

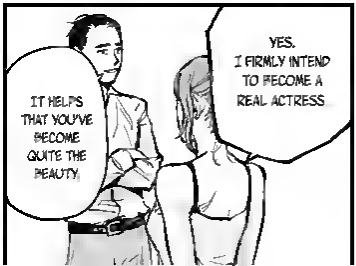
YUKITOOO!
UNCLE NOBUTERU ...
HEY...
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED ONE BIT, HAVE YOU.
STOP.
YOU'RE HEAVY...
NOW THAT YOU GOT YOUR LICENSE, COULDN'T YOU SWITCH WITH YOUR FATHER, ONCE IN A WHILE?
HMMM?
SURE...
MAYBE...
NEXT TIME...
WHAT'S THIS?
WHY THE LONG FACE?
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE STILL JOBLESS?

OH, BULLSEYE?
YOU AIMING TO BECOME A USELESS BUM OR WHAT?

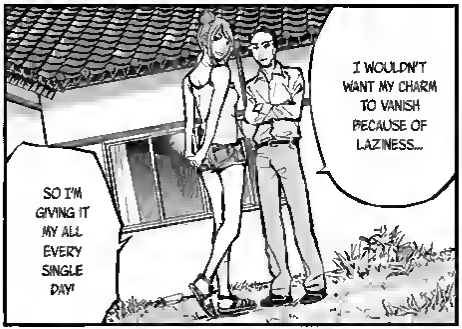

CRAP, SHE CAME TOO?
GIVE ME A BREAK

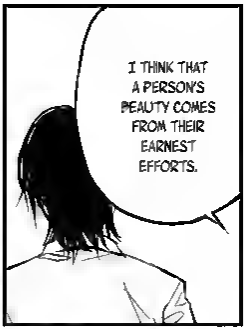
WELL, THE WORLD ALWAYS SEEMS TO SHINE WHEN YOU HAVE DREAMS.


I SEE YOU'RE DOING FINE, TERUMI
I HEARD YOU WERE STILL GIVING YOUR ALL ON THE STAGE?

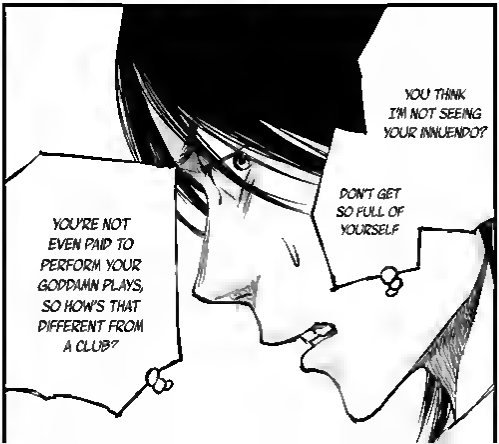

YES. I FIRMLY INTEND TO BECOME A REAL ACTRESS
IT HELPS THAT YOU'VE BECOME QUITE THE BEAUTY.

I JUST HAVE TO TELL MYSELF THAT THE PART-TIME JOBS ARE PART OF MY TRAINING...
AND THAT FEELING A PIT DOWN HELPS ME POLISH MY ART, TO STAY IN THE RIGHT MOOD.


I WOULDN'T WANT MY CHARM TO VANISH BECAUSE OF LAZINESS...
SO I'M GIVING IT MY ALL EVERY SINGLE DAY!


I THINK THAT A PERSON'S BEAUTY COMES FROM THEIR EARNEST EFFORTS.

INSTEAD OF JUST DOING WHAT SHE LIKES AND SHUTTING UP, SHE HAS TO DRAG ME THROUGH THE MUD.

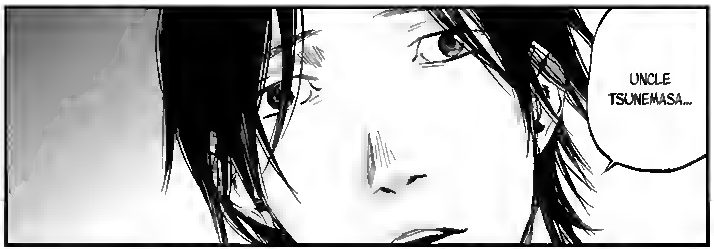

YOU THINK I'M NOT SEEING YOUR INNUENDO?
DON'T GET SO FULL OF YOURSELF
YOU'RE NOT EVEN PAID TO PERFORM YOUR GODDAMN PLAYS, SO HOW'S THAT DIFFERENT FROM A CLUB?

I'M... VERY CONVENIENT EXCUSE, THAT'S FOR SURE..
IN THE END SHE JUST WANTS TO FEEL MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT HER OWN TALENT.
SERIOUSLY, WHAT A PAIN.
OH HI, TERUYA.
WHAT GAME ARE YOU PLAYING? WANYA DORA?
I MANAGED TO CAPTURE A LITTLE DRAGON IN THIS AREA.
SO I'M TRYING AGAIN
.....
'SUP

HEY THERE, TERUYA !
SINCE MOM COULDN'T COME, WE'RE SHORT ON HANDS, SO MOVE YOUR ASS, WILL YOU?
YOU SERIOUS?! THAT ONE'S SUPER RARE!
YOU'RE AWESOME, MAN!!
OUCH!
AH!
TERUMI, YOU...
YUKITO, IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE DOING FINE!
DON'T SCREW WITH ME, I'MMA KILL YOU!
YEAH, YEAH, SHUT UP AND GET TO WORK!
THE TERUTERU SIBLINGS...

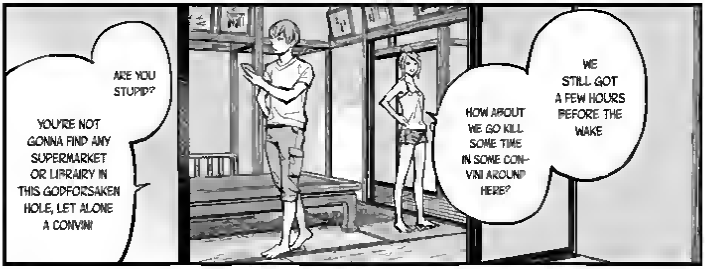
I GUESS EVERYONE'S CRITICIZING YOU, BUT JUST THINK OF IT AS RECHARGING YOUR BATTERIES.

I WAS WORRIED, YOU KNOW?
I HEARD YOU QUIT YOUR JOB ALL OF A SUDDEN.


UNCLE TSUNEMASA...

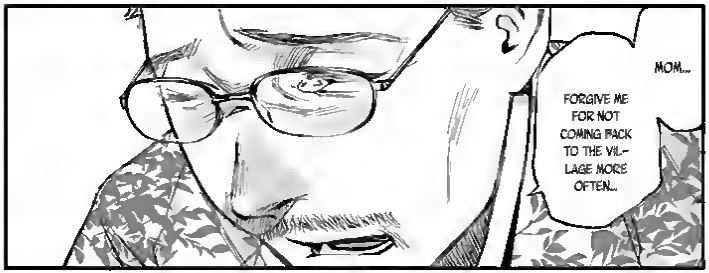
EXCEPT NO ONE'S GONNA HIRE ME WHEN I'M THIRTY...
.....
PERMANENT JOBS HAVE BECOME RARE, ANYWAYS.
SO FOR NOW, YOU CAN KEEP SOME RESERVES AND START TO GO ALL OUT WHEN YOU TURN 30 OR SOMETHING.
NEXT TIME, I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE SEA!
ERR, SURE...

And thus, the seven members of the Tadamura family happily gathered.


We still got a few hours before the wake
How about we go kill some time in some convini around here?
Are you stupid?
You're not gonna find any supermarket or library in this godforsaken hole, let alone a convini

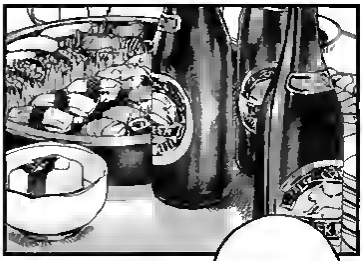
Yukito.
Yue.
Come greet your grandmother

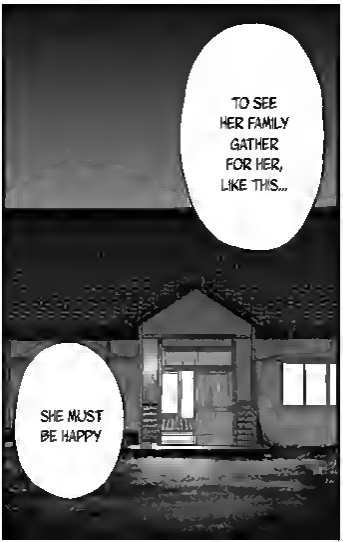
Yeah, but we can, like, borrow dad's car to look further or something.
You barely ever drive, and you wanna challenge a mountain road?


MOM...
FORGIVE ME FOR NOT COMING BACK TO THE VIL-LAGE MORE OFTEN...

I STILL HAD BAD MEMORIES
ABOUT ALL THE TIMES YOU SCOLDED ME WHEN I WAS A KID..
WAS SHE REALLY THAT STRICT?
.. WELL... SHE WAS REALLY ADA-MANT ABOUT UPHOLDING THE VILLAGE'S CUSTOMS

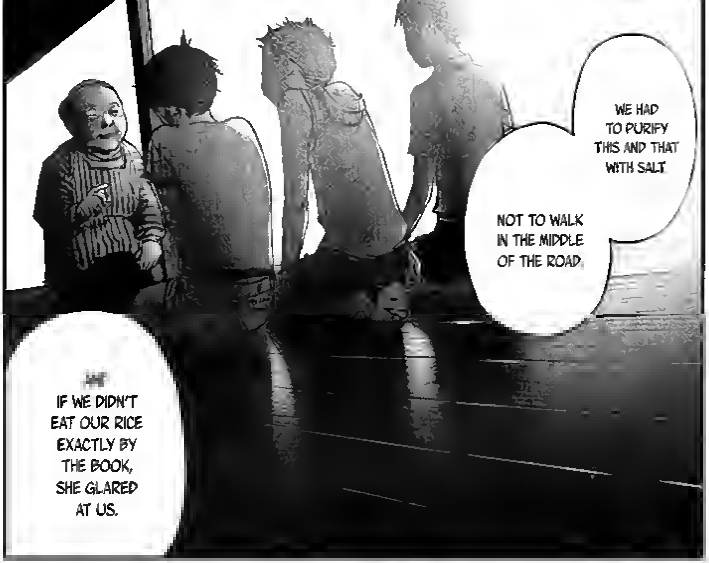
BUT OTHERWISE, SHE WAS VERY KIND.




TO SEE HER FAMILY GATHER FOR HER, LIKE THIS...
SHE MUST BE HAPPY

WE CANNOT THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

I WAS PRETTY SURE SHE HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR YOU.
HUH, REALLY?
I SPENT MY DAYS PLAYING OUTSIDE, SO IT'S NO SURPRISE...
NOW THAT I THINK OF IT, MOM NEVER SCOLDED YOU, DID SHE?
ARE YOU KIDDING? I MADE HER ANGRY MORE THAN ONCE.
UNLIKE ME, WHO WAS CONSTANTLY UNDER FIRE.
RIGHT, MASASHI?
TSUNEMASA WAS SCOLDED TOO WHEN HE VIOLATED THE RULES, YOU KNOW?
AFTER ALL, DIDN'T WE ALL LEAVE THIS PLACE PRECISELY BE-CAUSE OF THOSE PESKY CUSTOMS?
YEAH, RIGHT?!
JUST LIKE YOU TWO!
AYUP, SHE DIDN'T JOKE WHEN IT CAME TO THE RULES.


WE HAD TO PURIFY THIS AND THAT WITH SALT.
NOT TO WALK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD.
IF WE DIDN'T EAT OUR RICE EXACTLY BY THE BOOK, SHE GLARED AT US.

WE COULDN'T GO INTO THE MOUNTAINS.
AND WE HAD TO WASH OUR HANDS BEFORE ENTERING THE VILLAGE.

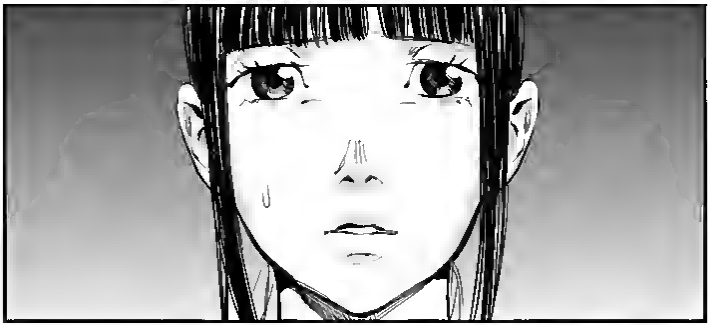
HAHA..
YOU CAN SAY THAT.
AND I TAUGHT MY TWO KIDS NOT TO FRET OVER DETAILS.

BUT YOU ENDED UP IGNORING THOSE RULES, EH, TERU?

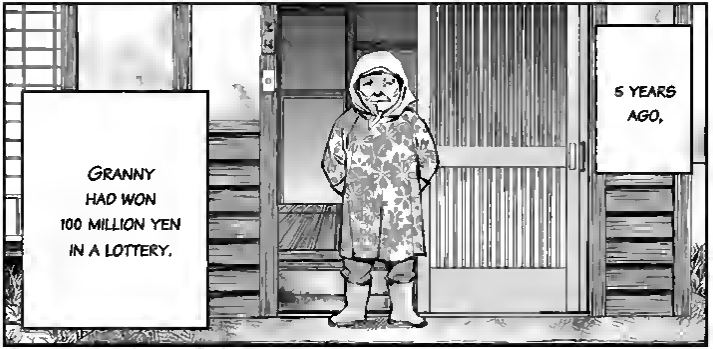
I DON'T EXACTLY WANT TO HEAR THAT FROM YOU, UNCLE
YOU'RE SO, STILL SINGLE, AND YOU SPEND YOUR TIME TRAVELLING LEFT AND RIGHT.
OH, I SEE.
AND THAT'S BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T WANT TO "FRET OVER DETAILS" THAT TERUMI'S STILL CHASING HER DREAM?
HAHA...
I TOLD TERUMI TO LIVE HOWEVER SHE WISHED
AND TERUYA TOO, ALTHOUGH HE'S NOT QUITE THERE YET
IN THE END...
WHAT MATTERS IS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERY DECISION YOU MAKE.
HERE WE GO...

EVEN I HAD MY OWN DREAMS.
YOU KNOW, MASASHI...
WELL, I'M GONNA TAKE A PATH, IF YOU DON'T MIND
BUT ALL THAT REMAINED MERE SCRIBBLES ON PAPER
I WANTED TO HIRE MORE EMPLOYEES AND MAKE MY OFFICE GROW..
I'D HAVE WENT INTO SOME RECK-LESS BUSINESS VENTURE TOO!
BUT IF I KNEW I COULD JUST THROW BOR-ROWED CAPITAL OUT THE WINDOW,
JUST LET THIS KIND OF BULLSHIT TO THE MEN.
YOU SHOULD REST, IF YOU ASK ME.
I'LL BE FINE, THANK YOU.
UHM...

Y'KNOW, LIKE YOU AND YOUR WIFE!



HAH...


5 YEARS AGO,
GRANNY HAD WON 100 MILLION YEN IN A LOTTERY.

SHE WASN'T THE GREEDY KIND,
AND DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THAT MONEY.

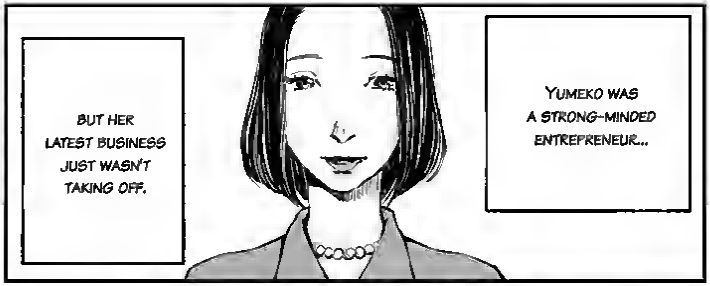
So much money for a half-dead grandma...

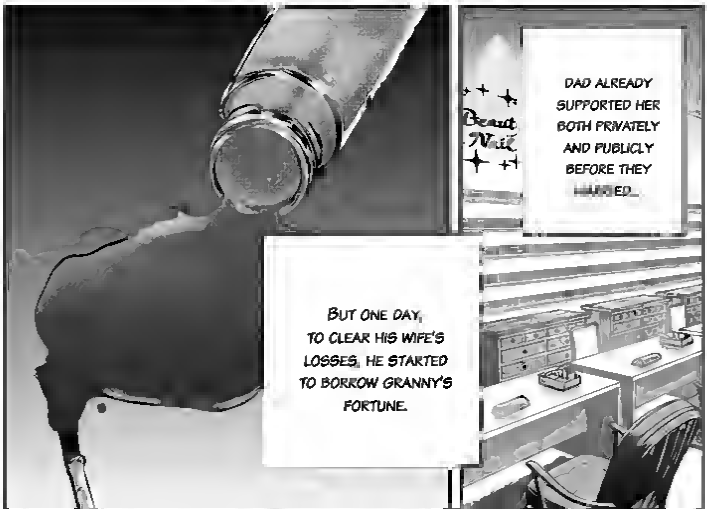
THEN, ONE DAY, MY DAD REMARRIED.

SO SHE DECIDED THAT HER THREE SONS WOULD INHERIT IT EQUALLY.

Talk about a waste.

DAD MARRIED A WOMAN WHO ALREADY HAD A DAUGHTER.
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TURMOIL ABOUT THE 100 MILLION,

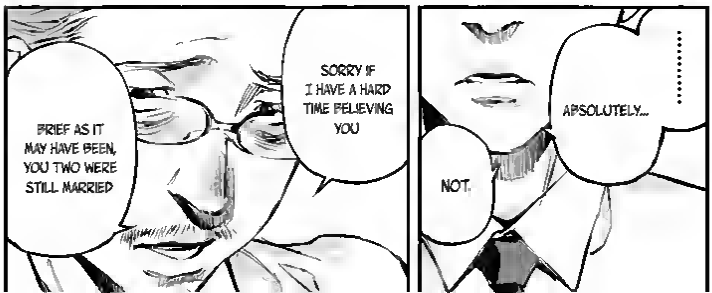

BUT HER LATEST BUSINESS JUST WASN'T TAKING OFF.
YUMEKO WAS A STRONG-MINDED ENTREPRENEUR...


DAD ALREADY SUPPORTED HER BOTH PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY BEFORE THEY [illegible]ED...
BUT ONE DAY, TO CLEAR HIS WIFE'S LOSSES, HE STARTED TO BORROW GRANNY'S FORTUNE.

He borrowed 5 million, then 10 million...
So I guess Dad probably wanted to atone for having neglected his family in the past, and he invested himself tirelessly to help Yumeko.
His former wife was a workaholic and died from it.
Gradually vanished into a hopeless business plan.
The money won by Granny...
Yumeko suddenly disappeared.
And when nothing was left of it...

MASASHI
YOU STILL HAVE NO CLUE...
ABOUT YUMEKO'S WHEREABOUTS?

I'M ACTUALLY PRETTY SURE HE DOES. RIGHT?

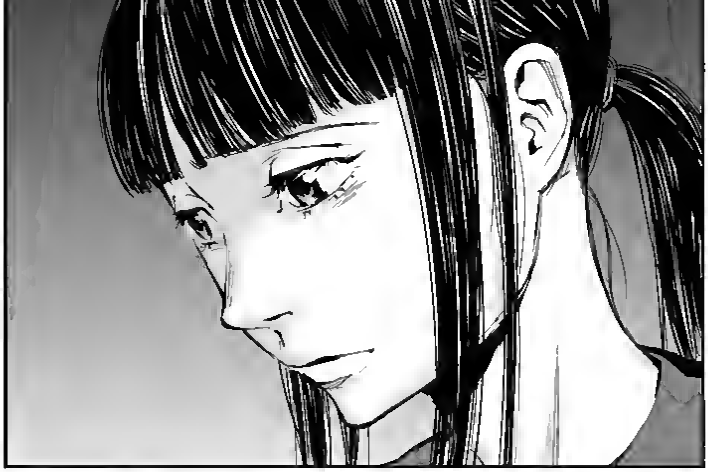

.....
ABSOLUTELY...
NOT.
SORRY IF I HAVE A HARD TIME BELIEVING YOU
BRIEF AS IT MAY HAVE BEEN, YOU TWO WERE STILL MARRIED

TE-
TERU.
AND THAT GIRL, WHAT DOES SHE THINK OF IT?
YOU AND YOUR MOM.
ARE IN CAHOOTS, AREN'T YOU?
WHY SHOULD WE EVER TRUST YOU, HUH?!
YOU POPPED UP FROM NOWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR FAMILY!
YOU FOOLED US WITH AN NICE AND AMBITIOUS PROJECT,
BUT BEHIND THE SCENES, YOU WERE CONSPIRING
TO EMBEZZLE THE TADAMURA FAMILY'S 100 MILLION YEN FORTUNE, AM I WRONG?!

OH, SHUT UP!!
BRING YOUR DAMN MOTHER HERE!
TERU, I THINK YOU'VE DRUNK ENOUGH...
THE TOPIC'S BROUGHT UP EVERY TIME WE GATHER,
AND UNCLE NOBUTERU ALWAYS STARTS TO RANT WHILE DRUNK. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
IT DON'T LIKE IT EITHER, BUT YOU'RE AN ADULT, SO BEAR WITH IT ALREADY.
DOES DAD...
STILL EXPECT HER TO COME BACK...?

DAD MUST HAVE LASHED OUT ON HER AGAIN, FOR A CHANGE...
...AS EXPECTED

IF YOU DON'T THINK IT'S YOUR FAULT, THEN WHY DON'T YOU TRY PUTTING HIM IN HIS PLACE?!
OF COURSE HE'S GONNA KEEP PESTERING YOU IF YOU ALWAYS RUN AWAY!
HEY, DO YOU PLAN TO SLEEP IN THE BATHTUB?!
HURRY UP AND GET OUT!!
HE...
HEY, QUIT OGLING ME, WILL YOU?!
WHY WOULD I WANT TO OGLE YOU?!
YEAH, RIGHT!
YOU PERVERT!
GET OUT OF HERE!



MOM...
I ALREADY UNDERSTAND.
YES..

I KNOW YOU'RE NOT GONNA COME BACK.
THERE'S JUST NO WAY YOU CAN COME HOME...
I BET YOU TOOK THE ENTIRE RESPON-SIBILITY
ABOUT YOUR WORK AND THE MONEY..

AND THAT...
ALL ALONE...
YOU DIED SOMEWHERE...

AND I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP YOU...
FORGIVE ME...

WOW...
THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I SEE THEM...

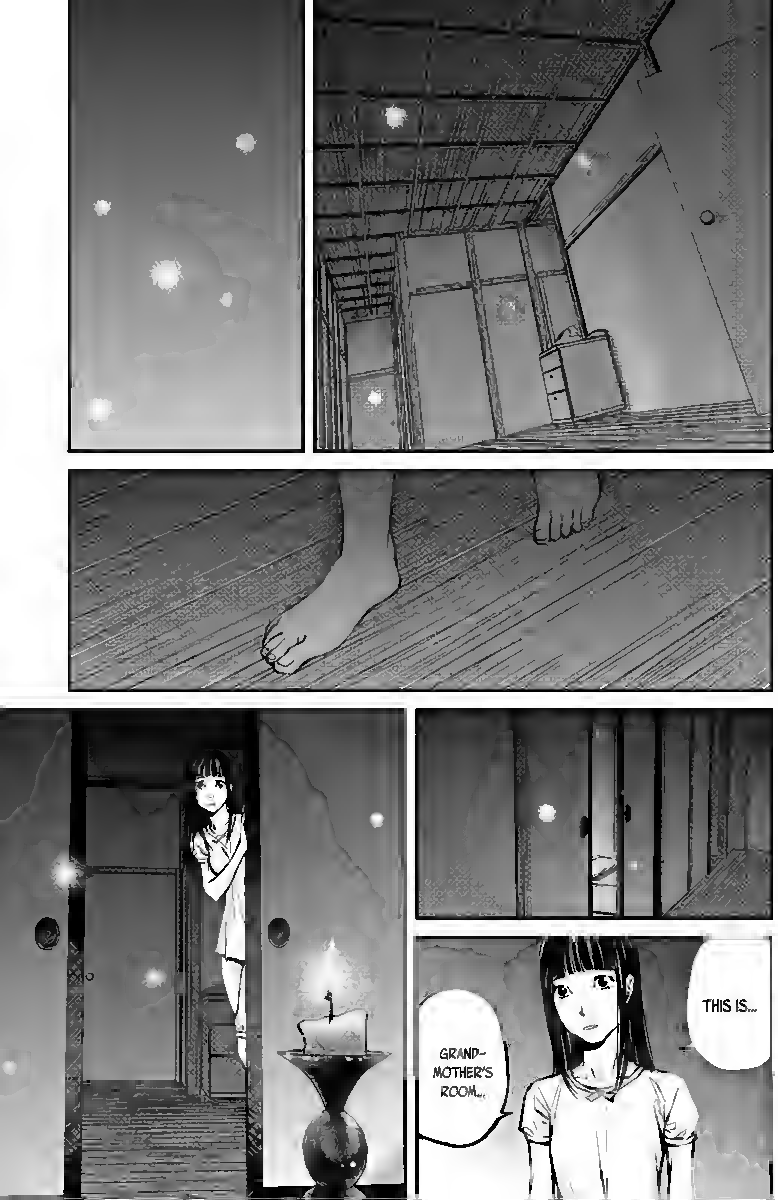
WHAT..
FI...
FIREFLIES?

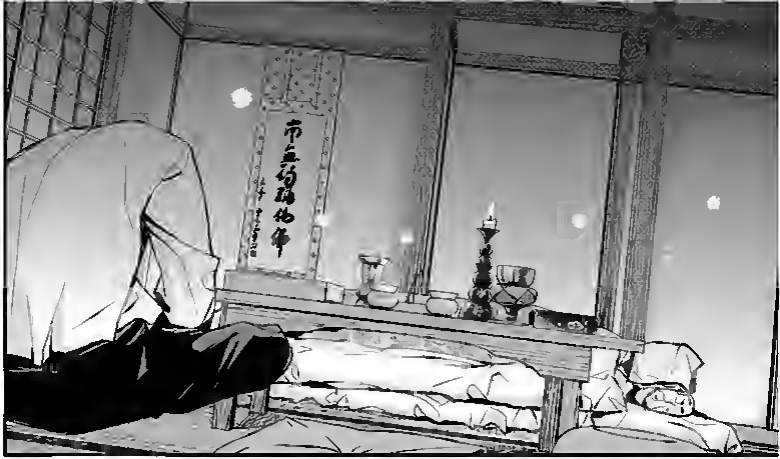
IT'S BEAUTIFUL

SO THAT WE CAN SEE THEM ALL TOGETHER
I SHOULD TELL THEM, NEXT EVENING.
RIGHT...
THEY'RE SO PRETTY...
I'M SURE...
THAT THEY'LL ALL...
LIKE IT...

ゴゥ
...WHAT?
.....

I'M JUST DREAMING...?
OR MAYBE...
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT FIREFLIES CAME INTO HOUSES...
SO PRETTY...
...BUT THEY ARE...
THEY'RE GOING AWAY..
OH NO..


THIS IS...
GRAND-MOTHER'S ROOM...



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HIC
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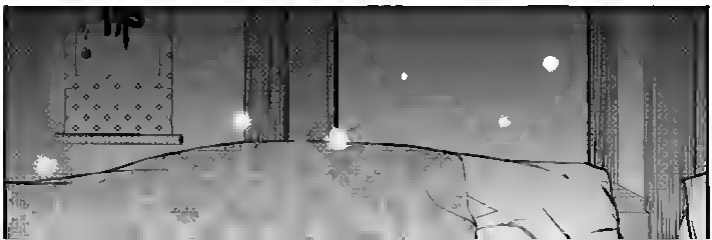
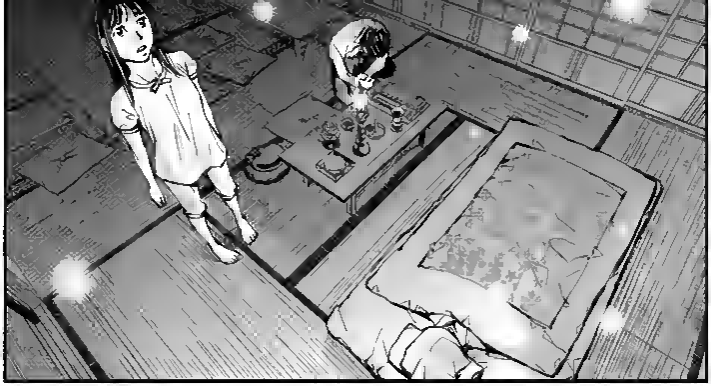
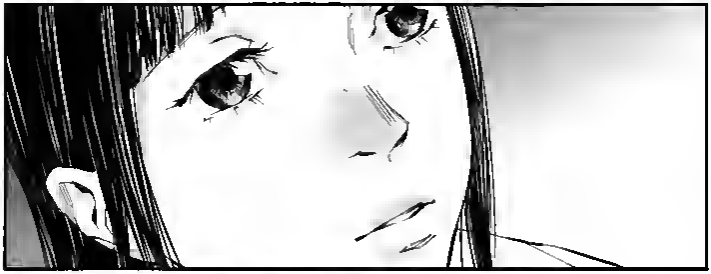
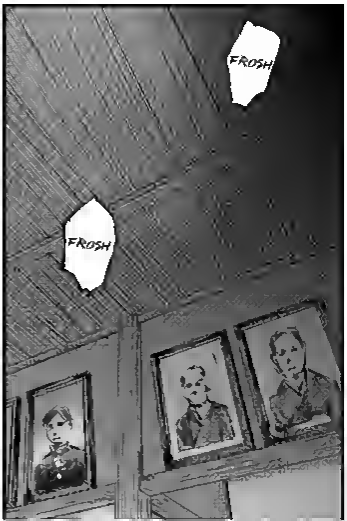
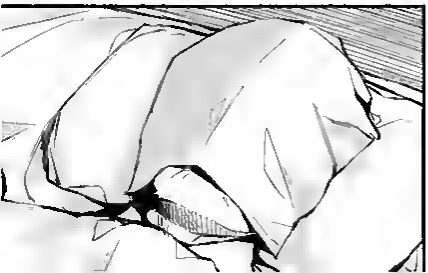
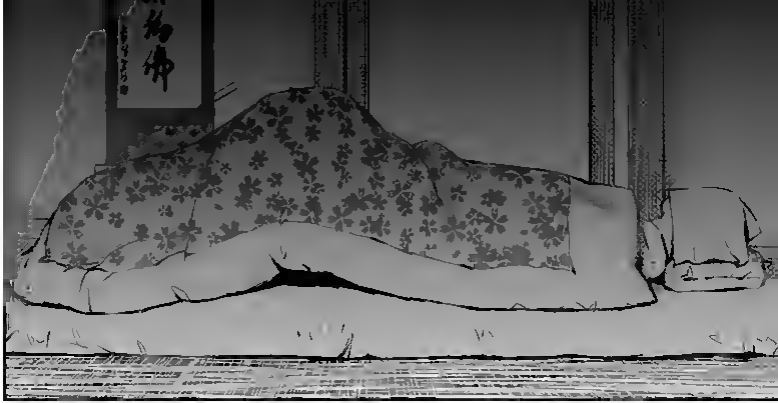


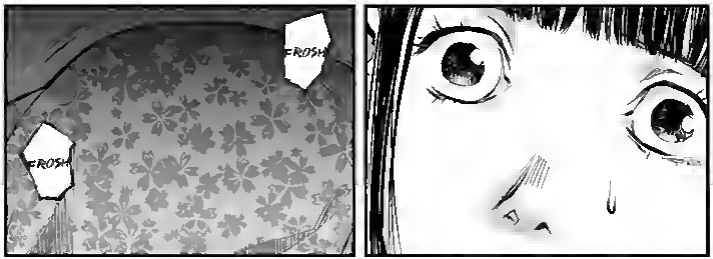


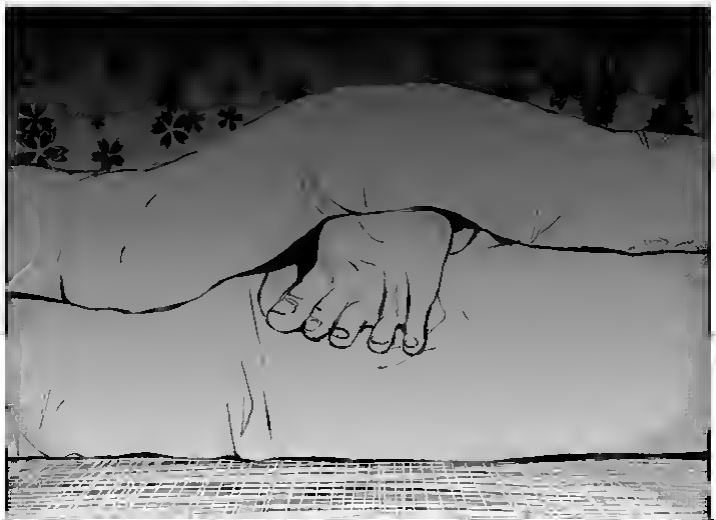



FROSH
FROSH






EROSH
EROSH



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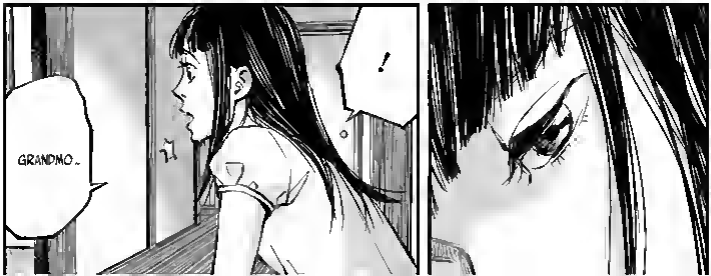
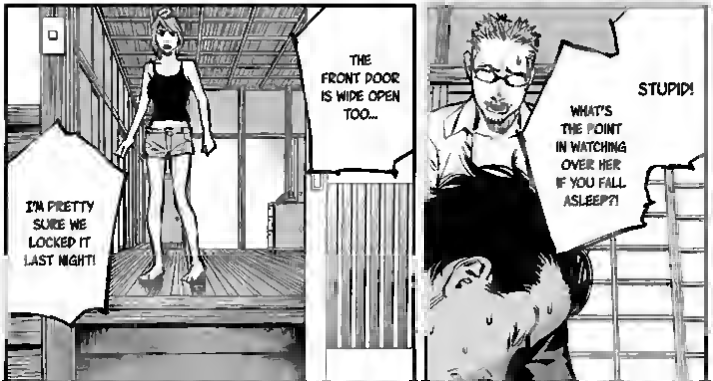
FWOSSHHH


GRANDMO..
!

YUKITO, WAKE UP!
HMMM...
QUICK...
GRAND-MOTHER...
EH, GUYS!
WE HAVE A PROBLEM!
WAKE UP!
MOM...
MOM HAS...

I'M SORRY
I DOZED OFF...
AND WHEN I WOKE UP, SHE HAD VANISHED...

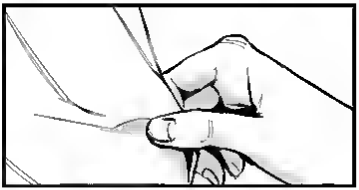

THE FRONT DOOR IS WIDE OPEN TOO...
I'M PRETTY SURE WE LOCKED IT LAST NIGHT!
STUPID!
WHAT'S THE POINT IN WATCHING OVER HER IF YOU FALL ASLEEP?!

CRAP!
HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIND HER?!
ISN'T IT WEIRD, THOUGH?
WHAT KIND OF LOONY WOULD STEAL A CORPSE...?
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE..
..SAY..
YUKITO.

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S STRANGELY QUIET?
LISTEN, I TELL YOU.
HM?
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE WORRIED AB...
I KNOW WE'RE DEEP IN THE BOONIES, BUT STILL...
WE SHOULD HEAR AT LEAST A FEW NOISES, NO?
NOW THAT YOU SAY IT...

NOT AN INSECT, NOT A BIRD SINGING...
COMPLETE, DEAD SILENCE ..

HEY!
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?!



UHM ..
YUKITO...
LAST NIGHT...

HUH?!
WHAT NOW?!
THE TELEPHONE DOESN'T WORK!
!?

TWO SUNS?
THERE ARE...

At that time,
no one could
have suspected

the tragedy
that would befall
Hirasaka.

Chapter 1 : End

蛍火の灯る頃に
07th Expansion & bokuto Kooke present
"HOTARU-BI NO TOMORU KORONI"